

The Dialectic of the Pygmalion Myth in the Age of Modernity

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Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. The dissertation does not exceed the word limit.

Contents

Introduction	3
1. The Pygmalion myth in Ovid	6
2. The myth of materialism in Boureau-Deslandes	9
3. The subject of modernity in Rousseau	13
4. The curse of animation in Gilbert	17
5. The myth of language in Shaw	21
6. Postmodern Pygmalionism	25
Conclusion	31
References	33
Other sources	36

Introduction

The thesis of this dissertation is that the versions of the Pygmalion myth in Ovid, Boureau-Deslandes, Rousseau, Gilbert, Shaw, and Brant are attempts at demythologization, which are paradoxically destined to introduce their own mythology. The Pygmalion myth is reality for protagonists in these works, but even for them it attains a controversial status of both an illusion and a miracle. Given that myths are refuted as illusions, and new myths inevitably installed in their place, only the balance of knowing and not-knowing provides the possibility of critically assessing the process of enlightenment, endangered by the triumph of unreflective reason. Opening up the myth, the modern authors imbue it with the inherent features of modernity: ambivalence and uncertainty.

While being aware of Losev's phenomenological conception of myth, I shall also look at Pygmalion from outside mythical consciousness and interpret it as an allegory within the cognitive paradigm of embodied realism. The theoretical premise of my exploration of the Pygmalion myth is consonant with Lakoff's contention that myth is an unconscious metaphor which makes human reasoning possible (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 215), and that it is therefore closely interconnected with, and constitutive of, the process of enlightenment. The conceptual metaphor theory will be applied as an important methodological tool to ascertain what kind of mythology is created by the modern authors in their interpretation of the Pygmalion myth. Analysing the metaphors in the texts, it will be helpful to distinguish between target and source domains, where the source domain is a concrete concept which is not simply similar to the abstract concept of the target domain, but which makes the latter meaningful. It remains to be demonstrated that behind each version of the myth there is an unconscious metaphor which presents the metamorphosis as rationally explainable, gives rise to mythical consciousness, and – because reason itself is largely metaphorical – cannot be eliminated by critical thinking. Although the dialectical approach to the Pygmalion myth as both a real miracle – a myth in itself – and as a delusion and unconscious metaphor is distinct from Losev's mysticism and Lakoff's cognitive relativism, it definitely resonates with these scholars' arguments about the omnipresence of myths, their persistence in time, and the holistic nature of the mythical consciousness of the subject.

The Pygmalion myth can be applied as a metaphor to explain the modern subject. The myth's ambivalence and transitory state between reality and illusion resonate with the symptoms of the subject of modernity. The modern subject is split between myth and enlightenment,¹ and the Pygmalion myth sheds light on the nature of this split. The myth itself is fraught with

¹ The 'splitting of the modern subject' is discussed by Cascardi (2000: 2), who argues that 'the modern subject is in fact positioned within a field of conflicting discourses'.

ambiguity because it is entwined as a foreign element in the fabric of each text, and the dynamic of the relationship between Pygmalion and Galatea destabilizes the myth. Using the myth as a metaphor for interpreting the subject of modernity, I reverse the strategy of reading the myth. The dialectic of this approach lies in examining the Pygmalion myth as both a target and source domain in the metaphor for the modern subject. On the one hand, artists use the Pygmalion story to inform their works and to present the mythical consciousness of the subject. On the other hand, the Pygmalion myth is demythologized by artists, and is changed according to their understanding or not-understanding of the miracle. Every new version of Pygmalion aims to explain the old myth as fiction but *nolens volens* reintroduces mythology.

In the framework of the dissertation, Pygmalion will be regarded as an artist and an educator; but in both cases the analyses of the texts will first and foremost highlight his mythical consciousness, which enables subjective perception to realize the miracle of animation. As long as Pygmalion considers himself to be capable of rationally explaining the miracle and assuming the role of the dominant subject, he risks becoming a slave to mythology and instrumental reason. Here – as in many other aspects of this study – I follow Adorno and Horkheimer (1972: 54) in arguing that the Pygmalion myth describes a subject-object relationship where ‘[m]an’s domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject in whose service it is undertaken’. Amalgamation of power and reason means that Pygmalion’s attempts to produce a miracle are efforts to gain power over his creation. In order to reach this goal, Pygmalion is ready to resort to mythology; but the age of modernity does not allow unreflective reason, and Pygmalion realizes that his domination and omnipotence are a mere illusion. The dialectic of the myth captures the moment when Pygmalion may either give in to the illusion or doubt the credibility of the miracle.

In Ovid, Pygmalion’s mastery achieves a perfect delusion: ‘ars adeo latet arte sua’ (*Metamorphoses*, X, 252). He believes in the possibility of animating his statue because it is so life-like. The original story – as we know it from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* – treads the line between a miracle and self-delusion. After Ovid, its nature has remained ambivalent over the centuries. One can even posit an assumption that it has always been controversial in its animating the inanimate. Examining the Pygmalion myth, I adopt the ahistorical conception of myth, and draw on Lakoff, Losev, and other scholars to argue that from the point of view of the myth itself it cannot be either an invention or a delusion but is experienced by human beings as authentic reality (e.g. Losev 2001: 36). In this perspective, the Pygmalion myth is a miracle of animation. And as the myth can be used to decipher the controversies of the age of modernity, Pygmalion as the modern subject and his relations with the animated object will come to the foreground.

For Adorno and Horkheimer, as well as for Lakoff and Losev, mythology is not historically superseded by rationality but constitutes human experience of reality and is common in everyday life. Hence it is reasonable to consider the modern versions of Pygmalion as variants of a myth, in spite of the fact that most comparative studies tend to view Pygmalion as a theme or a story (e.g. Dörrie 1974; Joshua 2001; Weiser 1998). By treating the Pygmalion myth as a myth, it is possible to do justice to the modern interpretation of the Pygmalion mythology and to contribute to its comparative study. All the versions of the Pygmalion myth are important in this context, since there is no priority of one work over any other, and each text contributes to the reactivation of mythical consciousness in the age of modernity.

This exploration of the Pygmalion myth is intended to show how mythology is problematized in modern literary works, and how the dialectic of the Pygmalion myth relates to more general problems of modernity. By way of close reading of the modern versions of the Pygmalion myth, I will be looking for moments in the text which complicate its reception, finding instances of subject-object relationship, and recognizing the underlying metaphors of animation and Pygmalion's subjectivity. The choice of primary sources is motivated, above all, by the task of unravelling the dialectic of the Pygmalion myth in the age of modernity. Ovid is a necessary introduction, and the final part is an excursus into the postmodern interpretation of the myth. Firstly, I shall read Ovid's original version of the Pygmalion myth and show how the myth is experienced as both authentic reality and illusion. Ovid's text introduces mythical consciousness to the story and complicates the process of animation. Secondly, I shall examine Boureau-Deslandes's novelette in order to see how materialism inscribes its ideology into the fabric of the Pygmalion myth. This work is one of the clearest examples of how one mythology supersedes another. Thirdly, I shall discuss Pygmalion's delusion in Rousseau's monodrama and try to show how Pygmalion views the process of animation. Rousseau's Pygmalion is an idealist rather than a materialist, and his animation of the statue is experienced as an illusion in contrast to Boureau-Deslandes's mechanistic philosophy. Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1870) will help to elucidate the process of alienation of the object and Galatea's paradoxical petrification. The analysis of Shaw's play and Eliza's alleged transformation from the flower girl into an artificial duchess will enable me to assess critically the failure of Pygmalion's work due to the triumph of instrumental reason. Finally, the danger of forgetting the Pygmalion myth will be explored as a symptom of postmodernity. With reference to Brant's *Autumn Duchess* (2011), I shall examine how postmodernity can extinguish critical thinking in favour of difference and nonconformism, which install a different kind of mythology without self-reflection.

The dialectic of myth and enlightenment is at the core of modern European philosophy and culture. It is inadvertently reintroduced with every new effort at critical thinking. As Adorno

and Horkheimer (1972: xvi) have masterfully shown in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ‘myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology’. If one acknowledges that modernity as demythologization and construction of new knowledge is not over, and that the project has not been abandoned by scientists, philosophers, and artists, then it is necessary to recognize that mythology remains within the tenets of the postmodern condition. The unfinished project of enlightenment faces mythology as its dialectical counterpart. The postmodern tradition realizes enlightenment’s self-revision, and as it reflects on the process of enlightenment, it uncovers the mythical origins of such ideals as freedom, subject, reason, equality, and humanism. As a result, postmodernism is the mirror image of modernity – where self-critical demythologizing cannot prevent instrumental reason – and yet it shatters ‘the modern project’s blind arrogance, high-handedness and legislative dreams’ (Bauman 1991: 17). Contemplating itself in the mirror of self-criticism, the modern mythology arrives at determinate negation as its final destination; as a result, ambivalence and uncertainty assume the key roles in understanding reality. Mythology recognizes its self-delusion, but the need for enlightenment forces it to reinvent itself. The act of undoing all myths as an objective of modernity becomes mythologizing in itself. The disenchanting world seeks both absolute freedom in determinate negation and absolute power in re-enchanting mythology. The balance between critical knowledge of enlightenment and mythological belief is achieved through creative work, as well as through the reader’s ability to suspend judgement and experience the work in the mode of not-knowing (e.g. Assmann 1997; Didi-Huberman 2005).

The dialectic of the Pygmalion myth lies in its complex relationship with enlightenment and its ambiguous interpretation of the subject of modernity. In postmodernity, Kant’s ‘*Sapere aude!*’ is repudiated and complemented by the exhortation to relinquish knowledge and to come to terms with not-knowing. Not-knowing and the suspension of criticism open a way towards understanding the myth as it is. If one takes it to extremes, this interpretative strategy will destroy the possibility of criticism and lead the critic towards determinate negation or mysticism. The vicious circle of not-knowing owing to the relativity of a scientific worldview and not-being-able-to-know due to mythical consciousness has to be overcome. Consequently, the essential task of my research is to find a balance between animation and reification, knowing and not-knowing in the interpretation of the myth.

1. The Pygmalion Myth in Ovid

The origin of the Pygmalion myth in art is found in Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, X, 243-97), and already this text presents the dialectic of myth and enlightenment. Ovid’s version of Pygmalion is one of the tales by Orpheus, who is mourning the loss of his beloved Eurydice and renounces

the love of women. The preceding story is about the Propoetides, who ‘dared to deny the divinity of Venus’ (Ovid 1958: 81)² by prostituting themselves outside the temple. They lost shame and the ability to blush, as ‘the blood of their faces hardened’ (O 81). In punishment, they were turned into stone ‘with but small change’ (O 81). Just like Orpheus, Pygmalion is a misogynist: he creates his statue as he sees the Propoetides and is ‘disgusted with the faults which in such full measure nature had given the female mind’ (O 81-3). It appears to be unreasonable and even counterproductive to make a statue when other women have become stone (Miller 1990: 3). However, Pygmalion’s statue is snow-white, i.e. it metaphorically possesses the quality of purity and innocence in contrast to the shameless Propoetides. The figure is carved out of ivory ‘with wondrous art’ (O 83), which gives the statue supernatural beauty ‘qua femina nasci/nulla potest’ (X, 248-9), and Pygmalion falls in love with his own creation. The statue is Pygmalion’s child, for he is its sole creator. Thus, his love for the figure is a transgression, an act full of autoeroticism and narcissism (See Miller 1990: 6). The sexual motive is most salient in the story, and Pygmalion’s incestuous passion has as its outcome the punishment in the form of breaking down Pygmalion’s lineage and Venus’s falling in love with mortal Adonis.

In the first part of the story, Pygmalion achieves a perfect deception. His art does not imitate nature but is a product of his imagination. Pygmalion’s adoration of the statue brings it to life. We learn that the statue has the face of ‘a real maiden, whom you would think living and desirous of being moved’ (O 83). The art so well conceals its art that Pygmalion believes his statue to be alive: ‘ars adeo latet arte sua’ (X, 252). He is either ‘a great craftsman’ (Miller 1988: 206) or a deceived deceiver. His work has to be absolutely perfect to make Pygmalion desire his creation. At first, the reader views the scene from the perspective of Pygmalion, who ardently gives himself in to the illusion of the statue’s animation; and the text unfolds the process of self-deception.

Pygmalion’s senses deceive the artist. He feels the statue with his hands and does not ‘confess it to be ivory’ (O 83). He kisses the statue and imagines that his kisses are returned. The sensuous, erotic side of the story is played out as reality in his imagination. While the statue is still ivory, Pygmalion speaks to it and ‘addresses it with fond words of love’ (O 83). He touches her and fears to leave bruises on her skin. Pygmalion ‘brings it gifts pleasing to girls’ (O 83), dresses the statue in robes and adorns it with rings and a necklace. The climax of demythologizing the myth is reached when the narrator (Orpheus) tells us that Pygmalion lays the statue in his bed and ‘calls it the consort of his couch’ (O 83). Pygmalion speaks to the statue, and his voice envelops it in the amorous fabric of mythical consciousness. However, the statue is mute, and Pygmalion’s actions seem to be comic to an outsider. From the point of view of

² Subsequently abbreviated to O.

Pygmalion, these are the happiest moments of self-indulgent imagination. The power of deception can be ruined by the subject's doubt, but Pygmalion suspends disbelief and ventures to realize his dream. The reader is unable to see why Pygmalion deceives himself, just as he is unable not to empathize with Pygmalion and inevitably imagines the statue come to life. This paradox cannot be resolved but should be experienced as the true beauty of the story: its balance between knowing and not-knowing, myth and critical thought.

The realization of Pygmalion's illusion comes through a sacrifice. Pygmalion offers a sacrifice to Venus and prays to the gods to give him a maiden like the ivory figure. He does not dare articulate his dream. Muteness of the myth – its opposition to voice – reserves imagination as its true realm. In later stories, the sacrifice will be internalized, but in Ovid it presents itself without the fear of being criticized, as the myth justifies the sacrifice and bestows the powers on the goddess who eventually animates the statue in the literal sense.

In the second part of the story, the statue comes to life while Pygmalion cannot believe his senses, and his adoration turns into petrification of his self. First, he touches the statue, and she only seems to be warm. Then the ivory becomes soft, and its hardness disappears: '[t]he ivory grew soft to his touch and, its hardness vanishing, gave and yielded beneath his fingers' (O 85). Surprisingly, human flesh is once again reified through its comparison with wax, which is 'easily shaped to many forms and becomes usable through use itself' (O 85). Disbelief and doubt infest Pygmalion's imagination. Warmth and softness are not reliable for Pygmalion, although they are constitutive of our experience of human body, i.e. they can metonymically stand for the animate nature of the statue. For a brief moment, he does not trust his senses once again: 'The lover stands amazed, rejoices still in doubt, fears he is mistaken, and tries his hopes again and yet again with his hand' (O 85). The lover is petrified by amazement, and his making the figure usable by the use itself alludes to onanistic repetition of a narcissist. At last he again gives in to the reality of the image of animation and believes his senses. Remember how the Propoetides could not blush and hence were not even perceived as alive. For mythical consciousness in the Pygmalion story, blush is not only shame, but also life. Thus, when the statue comes to life, she blushes. Her blush is the human nature which Pygmalion recognizes. This time the reader also believes in the transformation and consciously empathizes with Pygmalion. Both Pygmalion and the reader see a miracle, a myth reinstalled and simultaneously doubted. Pygmalion's voluntary self-deception in the first part of the story and his disbelief in the miracle in the second contrast starkly and appear to be an illusion. Paradoxically, the reality of the true transformation is less real for Pygmalion than his initial self-deception.

Pygmalion endows the statue with his own power but does not see the other in it. He loves the statue, and she becomes his lover. There is almost no subjectivity in the animated

statue. She is neither identical with, nor independent from Pygmalion because she is his creation. Even animated, she is mute, nameless, and her position in relation to Pygmalion is inferior: when she comes to life, she sees ‘the sky and her lover at the same time’ (O 85). The spatial orientation of the animated figure is highly meaningful. She is looking up at Pygmalion who is *above* her and hence assumes the role of the dominant subject. Otherness of the statue and its total appropriation by Pygmalion create the tension which will be explored in later works. Pygmalion’s act of animation can be seen as an act of sublimation in the first part of the story, but the true animation comes as authentic reality, i.e. the myth as it is. The reader and Pygmalion change places at the second stage of animation: Pygmalion cannot believe the reality of the myth, whereas the reader knows that his wish has been granted by the goddess. Finally, Pygmalion is persuaded in the reality of the myth, and the reader recognizes the mythical nature of the metamorphosis.

The fact that the reader perceives the story from the point of view of Pygmalion is crucial for the animation of the statue. If the myth is treated as a metaphor for creative process, the animation of the work of art rests on the ability to imagine things, to empathize with Pygmalion’s delusion and truly see the bright and picturesque reality of the myth. In itself, the myth is absolutely impenetrable to analytic thought and relies on our ability to relive it together with Pygmalion. Consequently, a blush is literally a feeling of shame and life, and softness is not a symbol or a sign of life, but life itself. Such direct experience is possible only due to mythical consciousness.³ Nonetheless, this absolute mythology has already been rendered impossible by Ovid himself. The text does not allow one to give in to the illusion of animation. Conversely, even the reader who analytically demythologizes the story and scrutinizes every unconscious metaphor to separate the target and source domains cannot escape animating the statue in his imagination. The dialectic between mythologizing and demythologizing, knowing and not-knowing, animation and petrification is present already in Ovid, and the ambiguous and narcissistic subject in his text dominates over the object and simultaneously enslaves his own self in the act of self-deception.

2. *The Myth of Materialism in Boureau-Deslandes*

How could a myth be reinterpreted to corroborate the ideals of the Age of Reason? An answer to this question can be found if one carefully reads Boureau-Deslandes’s novelette *Pigmalion ou la statue animée* (1741). The Cartesian mechanistic philosophy equips the author with a tool to

³ Mythical consciousness likewise validates the autonomy of art in modernity. Thus, when Gadamer (1995: 35) argues that ‘the work of art does not simply refer to something, because what it refers to is actually there’, he rightly compares this modernist contention to the Lutheran theological doctrine of the sacramental union which postulates that the bread and wine in the Christian Eucharist do not stand for but are the flesh and blood of Christ.

undo the myth, and present before the reader its materialistic version. However, the effort to dispel mythical consciousness reverts to mythology through the metaphors of enlightenment. The scientific undoing of the myth becomes its new incarnation. And, the novelette being a work of art, it internalizes the contradiction and problematizes its own status through symptomatic allusion to the illusory process of animation. The ambiguities of the story make it irreducible to scientific demythologization. Thus, it is impossible to consider Boureau-Deslandes's *roman philosophique* to be a pure exercise in materialism, or, rather, his work proves that early materialism is dependent on mythology.

The moment of not-knowing whether materialism may refute the myth and present a coherent realistic story is acknowledged many times in the text. The author recognizes this complexity already in the foreword to the novelette, describing his work as 'mélange d'objets inespérés & frappans' (Boureau-Deslandes 1967: 117)⁴. In the foreword, Boureau-Deslandes deliberates about matter and its essence. He asks the reader to admit that 'nous n'en sçavons rien' (B 117), and this not-knowing allows him to suggest the possibility of thinking matter. 'Un voile obscur couvre nos yeux' (B 117) and will cover our eyes for a lot longer with regard to materialism. The veil which covers our eyes does not necessarily mean that we cannot know anything; it serves as an endorsement for human imagination. If one does not know what matter is, why not imagine that matter is capable of thought? Boureau-Deslandes is a veritable obscurantist in being so close to the ideals of enlightenment. It may sound absurd and impossible, but then there is no knowledge of matter that would deny such possibility. One simply does not know what it is and can easily create a myth of thinking matter: a story about 'une Statue vivante & animée' (B 117). Ironically, it is not-knowing that validates materialistic view of the myth. Boureau-Deslandes repeats his justification of thinking matter, saying that 'nous n'en sçavons rien; & le peu qui nous est connu, le peu qu'apperçoivent nos foibles regards' (B 117) does not exclude its possibility. He closes the foreword with an appeal to forgive Pygmalion for his 'bizarre passion', '[I]'égarement & la folie' (B 118). Pygmalion's illusion, which gives rise to the wish for animation in Ovid, is played out again in Boureau-Deslandes. Furthermore, the problem again lies in the controversial status of the animation, as '[t]out est illusion, [t]out est caprice dans la Vie' (B 118). Perhaps it is not the animation that is questioned in this text, but its materialistic explanation, provided by Pygmalion. The status of the whole story as an illusion grants the narrator freedom to creatively work on the original myth. It can be hypothesized that Boureau-Deslandes tried to distance himself from his own audacious plan to explain the story and demythologize Pygmalion from materialistic and positivist standpoint.

⁴ Subsequently abbreviated to B.

Pygmalion is an artist whose power of deception is not limited to mimesis, because his marble and ivory statues appear not only to be alive and breathe, but also to possess ‘une ame & des passions’ (B 119). One day, he has a dream in which Venus asks him to create a statue and promises to guide his hand and ‘ignite’ (*échauffer*) his imagination, to which he acquiesces. Imagination is conceptualized here as a flame within the human body which can be either extinguished or ignited (See Kövecses 2000: 38). The pleasant dream seems to be reality to Pygmalion, and hence it stays in his memory: ‘Un Songe si flatteur resta gravé dans son esprit, comme une réalité’ (B 121). The animation seems to be impossible until the dream encourages Pygmalion to think otherwise, and illusion starts the irreversible process of animation of the statue. The transformation commences after the dream. What if the dream does not come to an end here? What if we come to witness its magical continuation? On waking up in a magnificent studio, Pygmalion notices a huge contrast: ‘Quel contraste! Quelle métamorphose!’ (B 121). Inspiration suddenly comes to him; he sets out to work on a piece of marble which becomes as soft as flesh: ‘le marbre devint docile, & prit quelque manière la mollesse des chairs’ (B 121). Softness – already present in Ovid – plays an essential role in Pygmalion’s sensuous perception and conception of the statue.

Pygmalion is enchanted and petrified by the statue in the process of adoration. He admires the statue, and his adoration produces an unknown emotion. In his soul, *mouvements inconnus* arise. Pygmalion does not recognize his wish for animation and keeps it secret from himself: ‘je souhaite un bien que je ne connois point, ou que je cherche à me dissimuler’ (B 123). At last he prays to Venus to animate the statue, to give it ‘la vie & le mouvement’ (B 123), but he has doubts about the possibility of animation. Because his wish may be superfluous and ridiculous, he does not hope that it is possible to fulfil his dream: ‘je demande ce qu’il m’est impossible d’obtenir’ (B 123). Animation is seen as granting the statue with ‘la pensée & sentiment’ (B 123), i.e. the subjectivity of the statue once animated will become its essence. At this point, materialism enters the discourse of the story. Thinking about the difference between him and the statue, Pygmalion comes to the idea that ‘[t]out dépend peut-être d’un peu plus ou peu moins de mouvement, d’un certain arrangement de parties’ (B 123).

Materialism with its particles invades the Pygmalion myth. Small changes bring about complete metamorphosis. The changes do not come at once but gradually take the matter to a higher level of organization (B 123). Pygmalion rationally explains the possibility of animation, and his mythical consciousness eliminates the impossibility of creation. The nameless statue of Venus can be animated without breaching the tenets of materialism. Pygmalion sees the statue move upon his reflection and first thinks that it is a delusion: ‘Ne me trompai-je point? Mes yeux, serez-vous complices des égarements de mon cœur?’ (B 123). While Pygmalion is

thinking about the nature of reason, the statue appears to come to life and tries to ‘à respirer, à vivre, à marcher, & encore plus, qu’elle s’essayait à penser’ (B 124). Thus, thought is introduced as the human essence in Boureau-Deslandes.

The narrator unravels the metaphor of human beings as machines: human beings are not different from machines in that they both gradually develop and then die; they both consist of opposing and complementary particles (B 124). Lakoff’s study of this metaphor in *Metaphors We Live By* explores why it seems to be viable to the person who subscribes to it. Similarities between human beings and machines do not objectively exist but emerge as a result of a conceptual metaphor (See Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 147-55). Some of the mappings between the source and target domains are necessarily inhibited to provide the semblance of correspondence. The source domain is the machine here, and the target domain is the human being. Pygmalion constantly deliberates on the nature of human beings, and his not-knowing about them makes the metaphor much more convincing. Therefore, he uses this metaphor to retrospectively explain the animation of the statue.

When the statue comes to life and acquires the ability to think, she asks herself what she is. She wonders how she was created out of nothing and, finally, recognizes that she does not know her own essence: ‘je ne connais rien à mon être’ (B 124). Paradoxically, thought is recognized by the statue as her only known trait and is simultaneously interpreted as her essence, which is unknown to her. Descartes’s *Cogito* enters the stage. Thought is the stamp of existence on the statue: ‘j’ignore tout le reste’ (B 124); it is her key feature: ‘le Sceau de mon existence’ (B 124). Conversely, thought remains not known, and it can be a target domain for a great number of more concrete concepts, such as the machine.

Language is a tool of learning for the statue and she comes to enquire into the state of things with a language of her own. The statue acquires subjectivity and independence from Pygmalion through language. The rise of subjectivity in Boureau-Deslandes marks the emergent mythology of the subject-object relationship in the age of modernity. The statue does not know much about herself, and hence she knows nothing about Pygmalion: ‘car m’ignorant moi-même, je dois encore plus vous ignorer, apprenez-moi quel est mon sort’ (B 124). She enquires about her nature, and Pygmalion answers that he has created her for his own sake and now she should live for Pygmalion: ‘Si vous vivez, vous vivez par moi, & vous devez vivre pour moi’ (B 125). Here is the symptom of Pygmalionism revealed in its most narcissistic and unequivocal form. His deliberations about thinking matter were necessary to animate the statue in a materialistic fashion, but the consequences of such animation are not foreseen by Pygmalion, who wants to appropriate thinking matter and make it subservient to his own self, therefore revealing his narcissistic and incestuous desire. Pygmalionism is rendered impotent, and the passionate words

are pronounced in vain, as the statue fails to understand their meaning and asks Pygmalion to teach her: 'instruisez-moi' (B 125). Pygmalion becomes an educator who destroys his own domination over the statue by endowing her with Reason. Pygmalionism is questioned, and the order of things is undermined by the statue because of her not accepting the social conventions.

When Pygmalion proposes to the animated statue after several days of education, she retorts 'avec cet air froid' (B 130) by refusing to marry Pygmalion, because it is not sensible to commit oneself to one person forever. She can stay with Pygmalion as long as they both love each other. Pygmalion is petrified and dumbstruck with such a twist of fate. Having invited guests for the dinner, he expected this gathering to become his triumph with the marriage proposal as its apex, but he was misled. It appears that the statue may finally become free from Pygmalion. If Pygmalion does not recognize the statue's otherness, he will lose her, but recognizing her otherness also means losing the domination over the statue. Pygmalion's dilemma cannot be resolved.

The mechanistic philosophy postulates irreducible difference between the two subjects, as they are free from each other. The meaning of the *deus ex machina* at the very end of the novelette acquires literal meaning, when Venus reappears and persuades Pygmalion to live with the statue as long as they both love each other. She explains to him how he can always be loved by the statue: 'tâche sans cesse de lui plaire, & ne la force à t'aimer: c'est le moyen qu'elle t'aime toujours' (B 130). The possibility of realization of the ideological ramifications of materialist philosophy is endorsed and secured by the goddess: the dialectic of myth and enlightenment arrives at its culmination in this finale. Employing *deus ex machina* as the ultimate resolution for materialism's antinomies confirms the preservation of mythical consciousness in Boureau-Deslandes's version of demythologizing Pygmalion's creation. The dialectic of myth and enlightenment is even more tangible when the effort at dispelling the myth is radically new and based on progressive ideals. The new mythology is used unreflectively, but its ambiguity is impossible to conceal in a work of art, where materialism is suspect because of its inability to provide the authentic reality of the myth. Pygmalion is discontented with the constructed materialist version of the myth, and the deity has to be reintroduced to prevent Pygmalion from questioning the legitimacy of his mythical enlightenment ideals. The incompleteness of the materialist illusion has to be veiled with old mythology.

3. *The Subject of Modernity in Rousseau*

Rousseau's *Pygmalion, scène lyrique* (1771) is a perfect example of how the myth can be presented in its entirety on the stage. Boureau-Deslandes's act of animation is within the myth of materialist philosophy, whereas in Rousseau's text the miracle inhabits the subjective world of

Pygmalion. Pygmalionism as a symptom of modernity is incarnated in Rousseau's play with its maddening narcissism and self-delusion of the hero. The reflective consciousness of Pygmalion animates the statue but at the same time corrupts the reality of animation: Pygmalion is aware of his self-delusion. It can hardly be called 'a successful union' between Pygmalion and Galatea (Joshua 2001: 42), because he has to relinquish reflexivity for the illusion to be perceived as authentic reality, while it is through reflexivity that the process of animation commences in the first place. The illusory character of the act of animation cannot be dispelled with reflective thinking as reflection itself is the cause of the illusion of animation. Pygmalion's self-deception seemingly overcomes the difference between the subject and object by dissolving the one in the other. Galatea bereaves Pygmalion of his essence, and he is only too willing to sacrifice his own self for her. The internalization of sacrifice misleads the spectator into believing in the reality of the synthesis of the subject and object at the end of the play.

The play opens with Pygmalion being frustrated and discontented. What is the reason for his frustration? Pygmalion recognizes that his statue has neither life nor soul in it, and his imagination is *glacée*, because its fire 's'est éteint' (Rousseau 1786: 7)⁵. The marble stays cold when it leaves his hands. The fire of passion and genius has left Pygmalion (R 8). The juxtaposition of hot and cold strongly evokes life and death as one perceives them unconsciously. Pygmalion despairs because the fire of imagination is a reality for him, not merely a metaphor. Without this fire, Pygmalion is unable to create. Pygmalion is 'un génie éteint' (R 9), and his imagination is cold because it cannot animate the statue. Yet, as soon as Pygmalion reflects on the impossibility of animating the statue, his imagination springs to life, and the hero is engulfed by desire. The secret wish for animation torments Pygmalion.

Pygmalion faces a dilemma. He is afraid of looking at his masterwork because admiring it may distract him, and therefore he covers Galatea with a veil. However, not-seeing the statue extinguishes his imagination. Pygmalion's genius is as cold as stone. Perhaps Galatea could animate *him*? This is her intended purpose in his eyes: 'Peut-être cet objet ranimera-t-il mon imagination languissante' (R 9). Pygmalion and Galatea reverse the roles; it is Galatea who animates Pygmalion. At this moment, Pygmalion admits that he has never examined his work, only admired it. Notice how the syncretism of perception is underlined by Rousseau: 'je ne l'ai point encore examinée... je n'ai fait jusqu'ici que l'admirer' (R 9). Pygmalion does not examine his work; he perceives it with all his senses. The statue appears to him in its entirety.

When Pygmalion takes off the veil, the process of self-delusion commences; he notices: 'je suis trompé' (R 10). Reflecting on his delusion, he is cognizant of it until the very last moment. As if in a delirium, he descends in the depths of his imagination and animates the

⁵ Subsequently abbreviated to R.

statue. Pygmalion constantly admires his work – ‘je ne puis me lasser d'admirer mon ouvrage’ (R 10), and by doing so he admires himself in it. He feels *amour-propre* towards his own self; his narcissism is ardent and transgressive. Pygmalion does not dare change anything in the statue, because to him it appears to be almost alive; the only thing that Galatea is bereft of is a soul. Suddenly, ‘le voile de l'illusion tombe’ (R 11), and Pygmalion realizes the impossibility of animation. But is it truly so? What is the metaphorical meaning of the veil? Is Pygmalion trying to say that he has escaped the illusion? Does Pygmalion begin to see the reality more clearly? Or is it the outcome of self-deception? It could be argued that his illusion becomes more real than the cold reality. When the veil of phantasy falls, Pygmalion’s imagination starts the process of animation. The text demythologizes the myth by showing that the act of animation is only an illusion, but the myth reasserts itself with Pygmalion’s belief in the possibility of animation. Pygmalion sacrifices reality for the sake of the myth; the myth becomes more real than the self-consciousness of the cold, extinguished imagination.

Pygmalion calls the statue the *objet inanimé, un marbre, une pierre, une masse informe* (R 12) and even gives it a proper name before its animation. By giving a name to the statue, he asserts control over it. Nomination establishes the authority of the subject over the object, and hence it inaugurates Pygmalion’s appropriation of Galatea. Conversely, naming alienates the object and endows it with strangeness, as one relates to it and confronts its otherness. Although Pygmalion names Galatea and grants her his own essence, this process of self-sacrifice may be an illusion. Perhaps he can actually dominate Galatea and dissolve her otherness in his own self. Language as an emancipatory and simultaneously manipulative force is both Pygmalion’s enemy and disciple. Narcissism and self-sacrifice, realized with the medium of language, split the subject and present to us the moment of the dialectic of the myth. The subject sacrifices his own self to gain utter control of the other.

Pygmalion is misled by his passions; his desire induces an illusion: ‘Insensé... rentre en toi même... gémis sur toi... sur ton erreur... vois ta folie...’ (R 12). He appears to exhort his illusion and escape its power by recognizing his madness. Yet he does not want to abandon his desire and finds excuses for his illusion: ‘Oui... ma seule folie est de discerner la beauté... mon seul crime est d'y être sensible’ (R 12). He gives in to self-deception because there is nothing perverse about his passion in his understanding of the act of animation. By refusing to recognize the transgressive element in this passion, Pygmalion surrenders to his illusion. He is petrified by adoration and does not feel shame when he animates the statue in his imagination. Just as the Propoetides lose their sense of shame and are not able to blush before they are turned into stone, Pygmalion is on the verge of indulging in the act of self-adoration, and shame is likewise banished from his soul. The cold and hot collide in this struggle between the still-experienced-

reality and the setting-in of mythical consciousness: ‘Quels traits de feu... semblent sortir de cet objet, pour embraser mes sens... & retourner avec mon ame à leur source’ (R 12). Pygmalion’s cold imagination is ignited by the sight of the statue, and as his passion is aroused, he feels warmth and understands that the marble remains cold: ‘Hélas! il reste immobile & froid... tandis que mon cœur, embrasé par ses charnues, voudroit quitter mon corps... pour aller échauffer le sien’ (R 12). In his delirium, Pygmalion believes that he can share his warmth with the statue and animate it. He reflects on his *délire*, but it does not prevent him from being overwhelmed by it.

Pygmalion cannot give the statue life without losing his own. It is remarkable how human essence is conceived as the content of the human body. Pygmalion confronts the inner incongruities of the conceptual metaphor of human essence as a substance within human beings (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 282). In general, this particular mapping between the source domain of substance and the target domain of life would be inhibited, as one can give life to somebody and not lose his own. But in this particular case, the metaphor is realized in its entirety: life becomes an object that can be given away to others. Pygmalion does not accept this metaphor and wants to live in order to be able to love Galatea. Galatea is now the subject, and Pygmalion becomes the other, but the dilemma remains.

Pygmalion is ready to realize his illusion. He addresses the gods, and for him the deity is *sublime essence, principe de toute existence, ame de l’universe, feu sacré, and céleste Vénus* (R 13). Despite the number of names, it is obvious that the deity is an abstract concept for Pygmalion, and *feu sacré* alludes to his own imagination, rather than to the goddess. Rousseau’s Pygmalion animates the statue by himself. Mythical consciousness enters here: ‘deux êtres manquent à la plénitude des choses..... Partage-leur cette ardeur dévorante qui consume l’un sans animer l’autre’ (R 14). He finds a solution by conceptualizing his essence as a divisible entity and asks the deity to let him share his essence – his divine fire within his body – with the statue in order to animate it. The statue may become ‘l’image de ce qui n’est pas’ (R 14). The phantom image of illusion is called to life with the help of a conceptual metaphor that allows Pygmalion to share his life with the statue.

Delirium seizes Pygmalion. He feels as if he recovered his senses and were sober again. But Pygmalion is actually in the polar opposite condition because he is destined to abscond from life and find reality in the myth: ‘Une fièvre mortelle embrasoit mon sang... Un baume de confiance & d’esprit coule dans mes veines... je crois me sentir renaître’ (R 14). He is confident about the fulfilment of his wish and feels that he is being reborn. But even in his delirium Pygmalion is aware of the fact that he is giving in to self-deception: ‘mais cette injuste confiance trompe ceux qui font des vœux insensés’ (R 14). The climax of the struggle between myth and reality occurs during the final moments before the metamorphosis: ‘ton délire est à son dernier

terme... ta raison t'abandonne ainsi que ton génie' (R 15). Pygmalion does not regret succumbing to the illusion, as his perverse passion, his hideous transgression, is now covered by the veil of phantasy. He notices that his love of the inanimate statue is resolved through his becoming 'un homme à vision', and the nature of his vision is 'prestige d'un amour forcené' (R 15). He enters the realm of '[r]avissante illusion' (R 16) because of his passion. Losing his senses, Pygmalion finally sees Galatea come to life. When Galatea speaks and recognizes herself in Pygmalion, he projects his own self on Galatea and sacrifices his *être*: 'je t'ai donné tout mon être... je ne vivrai plus que par toi' (R 16). Pygmalion loses his own self in the object; Galatea becomes the true subject of the myth.

Proceeding dialectically, one can observe how Pygmalion exposes his illusion in order to manipulate it even better and animate the statue in his delirium. Galatea has no other essence but that of Pygmalion, and she is totally subjugated by his subjectivity. The reader cannot know whether there is the other in the play, or rather Pygmalion unfolds the whole process of animation in his perverse imagination. The dialectic of the Pygmalion myth is masterfully staged in Rousseau's monodrama. The status of animation is controversial, and the myth is reestablished as the authentic reality of animation which is made possible through the incoherent conceptual metaphor of human essence as a substance that can be either sacrificed or shared. The inconsistency of the metaphor attests to the ambiguity of the metamorphosis. Rousseau's *Pygmalion* witnesses the birth of the subject in the world of modernity and simultaneously destroys the subject-object opposition, undermining the legitimacy of the subject. The tormented subject of modernity internalizes his relationship with the object and animates it by sacrificing his own essence.

4. *The Curse of Animation in Gilbert*

William Schwenck Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1870) combines Victorian comedy with the personal tragedy of Galatea, which can be discerned only if the spectator views the play through the eyes of the animated statue. Its message for the Victorian audience could have been the necessity of the *lie courtois* (Joshua 2001: 105), but I am interested in the dynamic of the animation process and in Galatea's experience of being normalized by education and society. Galatea's education stands for her animation; as a source domain it provides meaning and coherence to the process of animation. The question of educating the statue moves the focus toward the consequences of animation and changes the concept of the human being. To become one, Galatea needs to learn the culture and be integrated into the society. The implicit criticism of the social order can be found in Galatea's interaction with other *dramatis personae*. Gilbert juxtaposes Victorian values with the alleged innocence of Galatea, where innocence is actually a

myth and a different kind of culture. Galatea's innocence is also used for the comic effect where her words acquire a second meaning, impenetrable for the heroine. While Galatea appears on the stage as a 'controlled, trapped, rescued, idealized, defined and owned by men' (Joshua 2001: xxi) personage, she unconsciously acts as a mirror that reflects male domination and makes the subjugation of women recognizable to the modern spectator. The process of education is aimed at commodifying Galatea and turning her into an object for adoration; hence Victorian morals do not allow for a free and independent woman in the society, and therefore Galatea has no other alternative but to literally turn into stone again.

The motive of blindness at the end of the play alludes to Pygmalion's infatuation as a delusion. When Pygmalion is blinded, he repents and clearly sees that he was wrong, and he still loves his wife. Galatea is cast away once Pygmalion is blinded. His blindness can also be interpreted as blind allegiance to Victorian morals. Galatea disappears from Pygmalion's eyes; there is no place for her as a living being on the stage. Over a period of twenty-four hours, Galatea experiences the most incredible set of metamorphoses and is plunged into the alien world with her own idiosyncratic preconceptions and values, which the spectator is asked to regard as innocence. Everybody in the play appears to be influenced by Galatea's animation, and she is being gradually alienated after each new encounter with other *dramatis personae*. Ironically, it is the animated statue who possesses 'warmth, kindness and pity' (Miller 1988: 211), whereas other personages are the exact opposite in their treatment of Galatea. As she learns what bitterness and misunderstanding are, her sorrow contrasts starkly with the petty family drama of Pygmalion and his wife.

Although Pygmalion is a genius who has the 'powers denied to other men' (Gilbert 1870: 10)⁶, he cannot animate his statues. The cause of his discontent lies in his conceptualizing artistic creation as magic. Pygmalion considers himself to be a magician who is able to surpass the gods in their work. But his creativity has limits which can never be transcended: 'there's my tether' (G 11), bemoans Pygmalion his impotence. He acutely feels his inferiority to the gods. Right after the monologue where he bewails his powerlessness and appeals to the gods, Galatea comes to life and calls Pygmalion by his name from behind the curtain. The curtain reveals the phantasy. As the curtain opens, Pygmalion's imagination is given full reign. Galatea comes to life. She has a name and a voice, and her key traits are that she lives, speaks, and breathes (G 11). Galatea comes to life thanks to Pygmalion's prayer. From now on, she becomes the main personage in the play. The first thing Galatea does is speak. Afterwards, she takes Pygmalion's hand and feels its warmth: 'Give me thy hand – both hands – how soft and warm!' (G 11)

⁶ Subsequently abbreviated to G.

Softness and warmth are Pygmalion's attributes; the roles are reversed here, as it is Galatea who perceives the otherness and animate nature of Pygmalion.

Galatea tells the audience about her experience of animation and the *Self as Container* metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 275) is used to explain the process of her animation. The statue first developed self-consciousness within her marble body and then became aware of her surroundings. Galatea understands that she was once 'a cold, dull stone' (G 12) and recollects her being a marble statue. The 'first dull gleam of consciousness' (G 12) developed in Galatea before the animation of her body. Her 'cold immovable identity' and the consciousness of her 'chilly self' (G 12) were already present when Pygmalion was praying to the gods and lamenting his inability to animate Galatea. If Galatea had self-consciousness at that moment, Pygmalion must have achieved the animation without the help of the gods. At least, her self-consciousness must have been created by Pygmalion.

Galatea is animated by the invocation of her name, as she tells Pygmalion that hearing it 'seemed to shake my marble to the core' (G 12). She recounts to Pygmalion and the audience her experience of language. What seemed to be obscure became clear to Galatea. At first, she did not distinguish the sounds; they were vague and meaningless, but later they 'seemed to resolve themselves [i]nto a language' (G 12). As Galatea learned the language, her inanimate body was 'pervaded with a glow [t]hat seemed to thaw my marble into flesh' (G 12). At last, Galatea's flesh was animated, her 'cold hard substance' turned into 'the ecstasy of new born life' (G 12). And upon creation, Galatea immediately feels love and gratitude towards her creator. His name is the word that expresses her love and gratitude.

Despite her alleged innocence, Galatea loves Pygmalion with all her heart, and Pygmalion loves her as 'a sculptor loves his work' (G 13). While in Boureau-Deslandes Galatea claims independence from Pygmalion, Gilbert's Galatea recognizes that she is made by Pygmalion for Pygmalion. She has no will of her own and will be obedient to Pygmalion. In her consciousness, Galatea becomes a subservient being; she has 'no thought, no hope, no enterprise, [t]hat does not own thee as its sovereign' (G 13). Pygmalion's wildest dreams appear to have come true: Galatea now lives for his sake and is fully committed to him. She expects from Pygmalion to be appropriated like an object, selflessly offering herself to Pygmalion and thinking of herself as one with him. Alas, this union is impossible, because he is a married man, and the conventional morality will dispel Galatea as an illusion, an affront to Victorian morals.

Galatea's transfiguration is not questioned by Pygmalion, and the debate now unfolds around the question of the possibility to educate Galatea. The myth of Galatea is demythologized by Gilbert through allowing the metamorphosis to happen exactly as Pygmalion was dreaming about it. The fulfilment of his prayer has unforeseen repercussions. The apparently ideal

metamorphosis becomes a nightmare for Galatea. The first blow comes from the creator himself: Pygmalion tells Galatea that he cannot return her love, and she cannot be his wife, because he already has one. If Galatea cannot love Pygmalion, then why did the gods animate her? Galatea begins to wonder about this first incongruity of her plight. Pygmalion does not know the answer but presumes that the gods may want to punish him for his folly (G 13). Galatea is reified, as her whole life turns out to be the sculptor's punishment 'for unreflecting and presumptuous prayer' (G 14). One more unexpected revelation comes to Galatea when she is about to fall asleep. In her innocence, she does not know what sleep is and experiences it as death. She is terrified by the seeming approach of death. This illusion is an instance of an inverted metaphor. Sleep is often seen as a metaphor for death and is used to explain it, but here death is a source domain that gives meaning to the concept of sleep. At this moment, Galatea learns that humans are mortal, and thereby has one more disenchanting experience of life. Galatea learns disconcerting facts about her human existence: her love for Pygmalion is a sin; Pygmalion's love for her is adulterous; sleep is a death-like experience; and all humans are mortal (G 19). Galatea's paradoxical viewpoint introduces ambiguity to human experience. Her judgements may be humorous for the audience, but for Galatea they register a sequence of terrible facts she learns about life. Galatea's education becomes a torture of alienation for her.

Galatea provides a different perspective on human life and the social order. A brave soldier becomes 'a paid assassin' (G 20) and 'one whose mission is to kill' (G 21) in the eyes of the animated statue. She is appalled when she sees Leucippe, a soldier, bring a dead fawn. For her, the fawn is a living being, not radically different from her. She does not know what it is, but she understands that it was animate: 'Thy form is strange to me; but thou hadst life' (G 22). Afterwards, Galatea's 'misunderstanding' leads to a comedy of errors, where Myrine, Leucippe's lover, is persuaded by Galatea that Leucippe killed somebody. Myrine loses her happiness, and Leucippe may lose his love. This humorous situation has a sinister side if the spectator views the play with Galatea's eyes. When Myrine sees the fawn, she immediately understands the mistake, forgives Leucippe, and questions Galatea's sanity: 'Why, girl—thou must be mad!' (G 24) Galatea's innocence – a quality which was to be cherished in the Victorian society – becomes her curse. She is ostracized for being mad. Even Pygmalion sees in Galatea 'unwarrantable foolishness' (G 25). One can see how her innocence serves the double purpose of comedy and ironic criticism. Paradoxically, she is regarded as a lewd woman, a 'marble minx' (G 36) due to her innocence and naïveté. When Pygmalion is punished by blindness for his infidelity, Galatea has to disappear, because she causes too much grief and confusion. Pygmalion's creation becomes his punishment, and his talent is seen as 'the fearful gift of bringing stone to life' (G 33). Now Pygmalion's gift is cognized as perverse and transgressive.

Pygmalion is ashamed of himself for this misdeed. In his blindness, he sees his fault, and Galatea has to face a much sterner punishment.

In the Victorian society, Galatea becomes a scandal. She is a public nuisance, as Daphne's exasperation bears witness to it: 'But can't you stop her? Shut the creature up? Dispose of her, or break her? Won't she chip?' (G 33) When the blind Pygmalion – thinking that he is talking to his wife – confides to Galatea that he never loved her, Galatea understands the horror of her situation. Pygmalion loved Galatea only 'in mad amazement at the miracle' (G 38), and now her presence inflicts pain to him. She sees that she is not 'fit to live upon this world!' (G 39) She mounts the pedestal, bids farewell to Pygmalion, and becomes stone again. In Gilbert's play, the process of animation is undermined by introducing Galatea as a foreign element in the society. The social and educational aspects of animation problematize the initial act of creation and make it not only inane, but also detrimental to the society. On the other hand, Galatea epitomizes the modern subject for whom there is no place and who is an unwanted child of his creator.

Gilbert demythologizes the myth by allowing it to become authentic reality. Pygmalion's dream is realized to reveal its paradoxical consequences, which change the phantasmagoria of animation into a waking nightmare. The dialectic of the myth is realized through legitimating the magical act of creation and challenging its ramifications. Animation is possible in its initial stage, but the education and socialization of Galatea bitterly fail. The only way out of this predicament is the reverse act of petrification. Pygmalion's illusion has to come full circle in order to restore the balance.

5. The Myth of Language in Shaw

George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1912) can be read as a bold endeavour toward radical demythologization of the Pygmalion myth in the age of modernity. Through the study of Galatea's education and her socialization, one can explain how the Pygmalion myth is problematized by Shaw, and why the metamorphosis Galatea undergoes is controversial. In the play, education and language metaphorically stand for the forces behind the animation of Galatea. Language appears to be a tool for emancipation and social recognition, and becomes highly ambiguous; as Eliza is both empowered and enslaved by the new language she learns (See Reynolds 1999: 2). Higgins cannot change the social order with his pronunciation classes and Universal Alphabet, since instrumental reason is unveiled as a myth. Paradoxically, language is mythologized in the eyes of Pygmalion only to reveal its impotence and illusory power. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno (1972: 164) stated that '[t]he demythologization of language, taken as an element of the whole process of enlightenment, is a

relapse into magic', and Shaw's *Pygmalion* adduces evidence to this dialectic. Pygmalion is deluded into thinking that a human being is defined by class and language, and therefore his conception of education is limited to pronunciation, because the correlation between language and human nature is so authentically real for him. After all, Galatea has not *been animated*, for she was animate already at the beginning of the play. In Ovid, the statue is animated thanks to the self-deception of Pygmalion and the delirium of his love in the first part of the story. In Shaw, Pygmalion does not love Galatea, and the process of animation is thereby rationalized. The dialectic of the Pygmalion myth makes the rationalization of the metamorphosis destroy the possibility of animation and prove that Pygmalion's initial belief in the coming miracle was a self-delusion. Moreover, Pygmalion is no longer the master of his work, as it is now the result of technology and instrumental reason.

In Higgins's eyes, Eliza is like 'a pebble on the beach' (Shaw 1965: 724)⁷ which he picks up, and he is not afraid of throwing her out once the experiment is over: 'when I've done with her, we can throw her back into the gutter; and then it will be her own business again; so that's all right' (S 725). This disinterested object manipulation becomes a much more alienating practice than the passionate incestuous love of Ovid's or Rousseau's Pygmalion. In Shaw, Galatea is handled like an inanimate object and not even loved by her creator. Eliza attempts to persuade the audience that she is 'a respectable girl' (S 717). She repeats several times that she is a *good girl*, but for Higgins she 'utters such depressing and disgusting sounds' (S 720) that she has no right to speak, or even live. Because of her speech, Higgins mockingly warns Eliza not to forget that she is 'a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech' (S 720). Eliza's lamentations that her 'character is the same [...] as any lady's' (S 719) irritate Higgins and offend his ear. Notice how two conceptual oppositions come into play here. First, Eliza's appearance and essence are in conflict. Her inner character, or her soul, is certainly the same as 'any lady's', something that cannot be seen in the appearance but is equally present in everybody. However, her appearance indicates to Higgins that she is not a human being and may have forgotten about her essence. For Higgins, Eliza's appearance and language – being only conventions and not reflecting her inner self – directly correlate with her essence. The folk theory of essences (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 347-8) is used by Pygmalion to think of Galatea's essence as language and social position. But the play masterfully refutes such correlation and destroys the correspondence between appearance and essence, rendering human essence as something ineffable. There is no answer to the question what human nature is, and the old myth of human essence as class consciousness and language is problematized. Secondly, Eliza looks up at Higgins; she is a *lowly* character in the play, whereas Higgins is *above* her. He describes

⁷ Subsequently abbreviated to S.

Eliza as ‘deliciously low’ (S 723). This spatial orientation is reminiscent of the same situation of vertical domination at the moment of animation in Ovid. Galatea looks up at Pygmalion and is subservient to him. Power is unconsciously understood as being in a higher position. The primary metaphor *More Is Up* (See Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 51) is at play here. The *higher* social and economic position of Higgins makes him *superior* to Eliza. Both the idea of full correspondence between Eliza’s appearance and essence, and the spatial orientation of Eliza with respect to Higgins are challenged in the play, as the audience can see towards the end of the experiment.

The correspondence of Eliza’s poor appearance and language to her essence as a human being is problematized to the point of dissociating language and self. When Eliza acquires the necessary technique and takes the expected appearance of an artificial duchess, she claims that her inner nature has never changed. It is the attitude towards Eliza that has changed and not her own self: ‘the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she’s treated’ (S 746). Pygmalion is now not one person but the whole society which animates Galatea in its perception. The impossibility of metamorphosis, the mythical nature of the language in the play, can be implicitly conveyed at the very outset, when – on learning the name of the flower girl – Higgins and Pickering recite a children’s rhyme ‘Eliza, Elizabeth, Betsy and Bess’ (S 722). Although Higgins is ‘declaiming gravely’, the seriousness of comedy at this moment may escape the reader’s attention. Yet this rhyme could implicitly decipher the process of Eliza’s transformation from the state of a ‘draggetailed guttersnipe’ (S 723) to a *talking doll* and finally a *lady*. All these names describe one and the same human being: they turn out to be appearances which fail to define the human soul. Galatea’s human essence, instead, remains a mystery, a myth by itself. Pygmalion is misled by thinking that technology, language, and appearance would animate Galatea. Language deceives Pygmalion, and at the end of the play he understands that he never wanted to achieve this kind of animation. The education of Galatea turns out to be in vain, for ‘the greatest teacher alive’ (S 723) cannot animate the already animate human being. The task of Pygmalion becomes superfluous and self-defeating. One has first to alienate Galatea and deny her human nature to be able to animate her.

Pygmalion becomes a disinterested creator, whose primary goal is to prove the possibility of animation. In these circumstances, there is no room for romance. If Gilbert’s play is a comedy with tragic implications, Shaw’s *Pygmalion* is certainly not a romance. Given that Eliza is constantly humiliated and bullied by her educator, there can be no affection between Eliza and Higgins. The play never allowed for Eliza and Higgins to be lovers: ‘Galatea never does quite like Pygmalion: his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable’ (S 757). At the end of the play, Pygmalion’s domination is to be overcome not only through Galatea’s assertion of

freedom and independence, but also due to the failure of animation. It is not accidental that the end of the play has been changed a lot of times (See Solomon 1964), including the first performance (Miller 1988: 209). The audience and even actors wish for a happy ending in the play, not realizing that they thereby prolong Pygmalion's subjugation of Galatea and reassert the myth of animation.

After Eliza's metamorphoses, Higgins informs the audience that he was not only thinking about 'her confounded vowels and consonants' (S 737), but also watching 'her soul, which is the quaintest of the lot' (S 737). Did Higgins really see Eliza's soul? Did he manage to 'take a human being and change her into a quite a different human being by creating a new speech for her' (S 737) and hence close 'the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul'? For Higgins, pronunciation and soul come together, and he believes that improving Eliza's pronunciation he has improved her soul. Pygmalion's experiment ends in failure because of this false presupposition of a correlation between appearance and essence, speech and soul. For Eliza, any metamorphoses were out of question: she only wanted to be herself, 'to be natural' (S 750).

The consequences of transformation are not foreseen by Higgins and Pickering; their only preoccupation is the metamorphosis itself. After the end of the experiment, Eliza does not know what to do. She has to live by the rules of the middle class but does not belong to it. She becomes homeless at home and is uprooted from her background without finding a new place in the higher social class. She is desperate when she deliberates on her position: 'What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? What's to become of me?' (S 741) Higgins suggests Eliza could marry 'some chap or other who would do very well', to which Eliza retorts: 'We were above that at the corner of Tottenham Court Road' (S 741). The metaphor of domination as spatial orientation is convincingly reinterpreted by Eliza. Higgins's conception that he was superior to Eliza is now reversed on ethical grounds.

While language becomes Eliza's means of emancipation, her moral uprightness has never wavered. Her soul and ethics stayed the same. When Eliza manipulates language to outwit Higgins, he is outraged because his student uses his knowledge to ridicule the teacher: 'Don't you dare try this game on me. I taught it to you; and it doesn't take me in' (S 746). Higgins wants Eliza to cast away her false appearance, and he revels in his victory when she pronounces her 'A-a-a-a-ah-ow-oooh', seeing 'her father's splendour' (S 747). Eliza said she could never go back to her old way of speaking, but here the spectator sees her return to the *Lisson Grove lingo*. Higgins is beside himself and exclaims: 'Victory! Victory!' (S 747) His impotence to change Eliza for good seems in his delirium to be a victory. Shavian irony at its best in this frantic ejaculation! Higgins eventually recognizes his loss when he admits that his technology does not

allow him to animate Eliza. Her voice and looks are not what he aspires for: 'I can't turn your soul on. Leave me those feelings; and you can take away the voice and the face. They are not you' (S 749). In the end, Pygmalion understands the meaninglessness of the transformations he has achieved in Galatea and sees a chasm between Galatea's appearance and her essence. Language is unmasked as a mere tool and not an end in itself.

Pygmalion's instrumental reason grants him magical powers and enslaves him when he pledges blind allegiance to his trade. Shaw makes Pygmalion demonstrate that his powers are but an illusion. Pygmalion mistakenly revels in his failure to animate Galatea, who becomes the true subject of the play. Her transformations emancipate Galatea, but also enslave her in the social order of appearances. The text dismantles the correlation between appearance and essence and breaks the rigid opposition between high and low. Language is demythologized, and the relationship between words and power is proved to be rather precarious. In contrast, the audience mostly looks for re-enchantment and reinstallation of the myth in the play, because the contingency of the social order is reflected in the mass consciousness and any challenges to the myth are inevitably resisted. Thus, Shaw's drama becomes a romance in the eyes of the audience and asserts the Pygmalion myth as a myth of animation through learning a new language rather than demythologizes the story.

6. Postmodern Pygmalionism

It is now time for a short excursus into the postmodern condition of Pygmalionism. While the age of enlightenment – despite criticizing and undoing the myth – accepts Pygmalion as its paragon and disciple, postmodernity does not trust grand narratives (Lyotard 1984: 37) and treats Pygmalion as a liminal case: one of many other metaphors for the postmodern subject. Because the only grand narrative 'likely to stand a chance of success is the acceptance of the heterogeneity of dissensions' (Bauman 1991: 251), Pygmalion recedes from the public eye, and Galatea becomes a changeling left to the postmodern critic, who – by undermining the powers of Pygmalion – endows Galatea with unprecedented subjectivity and freedom. Galatea is allowed to be different and independent, but her animation becomes a myth once again. The subject of modernity may now be symbolized not by Pygmalion, who can be seen no longer, but by the self-sufficient Galatea. In this frame of reference, the myth once again reasserts its controversial relation to oppression and domination, becoming the celebration of individuality and strangeness.

Let us not be deceived by the semblance of the emancipatory power of Galatea's claim towards her independence. Postmodernity does not resolve the problem of mythical consciousness and the domination of Pygmalion. Bauman (1991: 259) must be right when he

states that '[t]he postmodern condition has split society into the happy seduced and unhappy oppressed halves'. The happy seduced half of the society is no less dominated by the existing order than the unhappy oppressed half. It is worth keeping in mind that instrumental reason conceals itself in the multivocality of postmodern myth. Pygmalion disappears as a hero, but he remains on the stage as a symptom. The true dialectic of the Pygmalion myth in postmodernity lies in that Pygmalion becomes the *rend* – if to use Didi-Huberman's terminology – in the fabric of the text; he is obliterated by the seduced narrator, who conceives of Galatea as a nonconformist and an emancipated individual. By proceeding dialectically and focusing on the split in the 2011 novel by Lucinda Brant, one can unveil Pygmalionism in its alleged absence from the text and relate the postmodern Pygmalion to his modern origins.

Autumn Duchess is a marginal novel far away from the mainstream literature, and that is why it is a good example for the study of Pygmalionism as a liminal case in the postmodern condition. It is a historical romance, set in 1777, which tells the story of Antonia, the Duchess of Roxton, who mourns the loss of her husband and refuses to put away the black. Later, she falls in love, and the romance begins. The book is an eclectic novel, full of anachronisms, conflicting ideas, and incongruities, which makes it consonant with the poetics of postmodernism (See Hutcheon 2005: 224). The novel's fetishism, with its animation of the inanimate, Pygmalionesque motives, and the inclusion of cacophonous discourses make it a legitimate case for the analysis of the postmodern Pygmalion. Let us look at the first two chapters of the novel and pay particular attention to the minor character whose importance cannot be recognized by the reader without the knowledge of the author's allusions.

Autumn Duchess begins with mutual adoration between Antonia and Jonathan, her future lover. The reader witnesses adoration from the point of view of Jonathan, and Antonia is seen as an 'exquisite feminine beauty', the vision of whom 'stopped breath in his throat' (Brant 2012: 1)⁸, which is reminiscent of the moment of adoration in other versions of Pygmalion. The gaze as the means of animating the object of adoration is contrasted with reification as 'it was only natural he should give himself the leisure to drink her in' (A 1). 'His admiring gaze' (A 1) both animates Antonia and alienates her in the eyes of the reader, who succumbs to the ruthless logic of the romance. The reader can marvel at 'the porcelain skin of her décolletage glowing flawless against the bottomless black of her gown' (A 1), not noticing how he alienates a human being to the point of perceiving her as an inanimate object, 'as if she was a statue carved of alabaster draped in black cloth; as much a fixture of the ballroom as a blazing chandelier or the enormous, richly woven tapestry hanging behind her' (A 2). When the dancers begin pairing up and walking past her, they do not notice Antonia, as if she were only a

⁸ Subsequently abbreviated to A.

statue. Such reification is deemed unnerving and false; Jonathan wonders why she is 'being deliberately avoided' (A 2), and finds no answer.

Lord Cavendish – a secondary character in the novel – explains to Jonathan that Antonia 'is a divinely beautiful, sweet-natured creature who is to be pitied', as there are rumours that 'sorrow has unhinged her', and her son had to invite Sir Titus Foley, 'a dandified physician who's made a name for himself in the study and treatment of female *melancholia*'. There are first symptoms of Galatea's alienation: her strange behaviour is perceived as madness. However, Antonia is a postmodern heroine, a nonconformist who manages to stand out against the efforts to normalize her. The reader is given what he wants to perceive: the painted veil of heterogeneity. But before we proceed to the celebration of difference, it is worth noting Sir Titus Foley, a character who is mentioned at the beginning of the novel and then happily forgotten until chapter eleven.

Jonathan misunderstands the reason for Antonia's alienation. He believes that 'her son keeps her under lock and key' (A 10). For him, it is no 'wonder she's suffering from *melancholia*', as she 'has no life at all; bullied and badgered and totally misunderstood' (A 10). Jonathan's misunderstanding of Antonia's alienation places him in complicity with her son and Sir Titus Foley. Therefore, she will not 'need the peculiar attentions of a supercilious quack', and Jonathan will become 'someone to talk to and a sympathetic shoulder to cry on' (A 10) for her, only to realize the normalizing scenario, designed by her son. Thus, Jonathan will involuntarily accomplish the job of Sir Titus Foley and 'cure' Antonia's melancholia, because her alienation is caused by the fact that her son wants her to enjoy life and love again.

Antonia's son does not know what to do to 'drag her out of the vat of grief and self-pity' (A 12). She was 'once animated, happy creature' (A 13), but now her mourning is a cause of sorrow and distress to her son; she is seen as an inanimate object, lacking life. As a result, he decides 'to try a different approach, one [...] the eminent physician Sir Titus Foley had assured him was the only way to shake his mother to her senses' (A 13). Sir Titus Foley is mentioned for the second time in the novel. The Duke resorts to his services to make his mother happy again. The reader is led to believe that Antonia's nonconformism does not wane, which happens for the reason that one does not know about Sir Foley's 'different approach' and can only surmise what it involves. After a discussion with his mother about her mourning, the Duke informs Antonia that he has invited Sir Titus Foley (A 14). Yet again Sir Titus Foley emerges, and mere mentioning his name produces a shudder in Antonia: "What?" she responded, a quick agitated movement of a slender wrist flicking open her fan. She suppressed a shiver of loathing' (A 14). Sir Titus Foley is 'a disgusting, fat-fingered quack' for her and his summoning is *incroyable* (A 14). The novel postpones revealing to the reader the ominous nature of Foley's treatment

until much later in the novel, and one hardly understands why the Duke can blackmail Antonia by saying that he will ‘gladly dispense with the services of Sir Titus Foley, despite his assurances that he can cure [Antonia] of this excessive and unreasonable melancholy’ if she agrees to stop mourning (A 15). His words send ‘a chill down Antonia’s spine’, and an unknowing reader may believe that she ‘visibly stiffened’ after these words because she could not stand the idea of conforming. ‘*Cure her?*’ mentally exclaims Antonia in disbelief (A 15). Why does she become cold and rigid like a statue when she hears the name of Titus Foley and his intention to ‘cure her’? The text beguiles the reader and seemingly meets his expectations by highlighting Antonia’s refusal to conform as the reason for her agitation: ‘*Conform?* The word wasn’t in her vocabulary. [...] She had always been just herself’ (A 16). Although Antonia does not conform due to the treatment, she is animated by Jonathan when she sees him, and their relationship becomes the driving force of the romance. Despite the postmodern insistence on difference and nonconformism, the text deceives the reader by presenting conformism in the guise of independence and free will of Galatea.

As in Shaw’s play, *Pygmalion* is a collective image in *Autumn Duchess*, where the Duke, Sir Titus Foley, and Jonathan jointly fulfil the function of animating Antonia. While the roles of the Duke and Jonathan in the process of animation are well decipherable, Sir Titus Foley stands out as an opaque reference to the psychological ideas at the dawn of the Age of Reason. The reader is misled into believing that Antonia was able to resist the normalizing practices of ‘a disgusting, fat-fingered quack’. One is set on the wrong track in interpreting her disgust towards Foley. Brant gives a clue to her readers later: in the author’s note, she explains that Sir Titus Foley is based on the real-life model of Patrick Blair, a doctor who treated melancholia in women and used ‘water treatment to sadistic effect’ (A 352). But she reveals this fact only after the animation of Galatea, presumably so as not to offend her readers’ sensibilities at the very beginning. The instrumental reason of *Pygmalion* appears as a surreptitious symptom in the novel. Antonia’s terror is turned into seemingly steadfast resilience and alleged non-conformity which crumble at the moment when she first sees Jonathan. What the story could really tell would be a story of domination, *Pygmalionism* in its pure mythical nature.

Patrick Blair, a psychiatrist in the early eighteenth century, used a method of water treatment remarkable for its cruelty and violence. His ‘Cataritick way of cold Bathing’ (Hunter and Macalpine 1982: 325) was more than effective in treating patients who refused to be normalized, and Antonia would have hardly stood a chance, in spite of her postmodern love for difference and nonconformism. Patrick Blair treated his patients as malleable matter. He would pour water over their heads, and his method relied on ‘surprise’; he would blindfold his patients before subjecting them to water torture (Hunter and Macalpine 1982: 325). In one of his notes

from 1725, Blair speaks about ‘curing’ a married woman who was considered to be mad, because she did not love her husband and ‘neglected every thing’ (Blair 1982: 327). This woman is similar to Brant’s Antonia in her refusal to love. He treated her first with ‘frequent bleedings, violent Emeticks, strong purgatives and potent Sudorificks and Narcoticks’, but none of these conventional ways of treating melancholia ‘workt for a wish’d for advantage’ (Blair 1982: 327-8). After a month of conventional treatment, Blair noticed improvement in the condition of his patient who ‘became insensibly to have the use of her Reason’; but she still refused to love her husband, only rarely allowing ‘her self to be called by his name which she could not endure before’ (Blair 1982: 328). One night, he put ‘her in hopes of getting home from thence [...] but when she went into the Room in which she was to Lay’, he ordered that she be stripped and blindfolded; she was ‘lifted up by force, plac’d in and fixt to the Chair in the bathing Tub’ (Blair 1982: 328). Unsurprisingly, this produced a terrible shock in the woman, ‘especially when the water was let down’ (Blair 1982: 328).

First, Blair kept her in the ‘bathing Tub’ for thirty minutes, ‘stopping the pipe now and then and enquiring whether she would take her husband’ (Blair 1982: 328). But she resisted the ‘treatment’ and refused to love her husband until ‘at last being much fatigu’d with the pressure of the water she promised she would do what I desired’ (Blair 1982: 328). Blair’s instrumental approach towards normalizing his patient produced a ‘salubrious’ effect, but later she again refused to conform. Blair repeated his ‘treatment’, increasing the time of the ‘Tryal’ from thirty to sixty minutes and adding one more pipe to pour water not only over her head, but also ‘in her face or any other part of her head neck or breast’; and the woman first ‘would not promise to take her husband’ until she was exhausted and ‘promised to Love him as before’ (Blair 1982: 328). Blair did not believe his patient and repeated the treatment in several days’ time. The ‘3rd Tryal of the fall’ was ninety minutes long, and the woman promised obedience and love once again. However, the next day ‘she was as sullen and obstinate as ever’, and Blair threatened her with a fourth ‘Tryal’; he ‘took her out of bed, had her stript, blindfolded and ready to be put in the Chair’, when suddenly she could not resist anymore and, being terrified of the imminent torture, ‘she kneeled submissively that I would spare her and she would become a Loving obedient and dutifull Wife for ever thereafter’ (Blair 1982: 328). At last he was persuaded that she had been normalized, and he let her return to her husband and sleep with him, ‘which she did with great chearfullness’ (Blair 1982: 328).

There is no mercy or doubt in Blair’s approach. His method is as immutable as madness itself. Galatea is animated, and her love for Pygmalion returns. It was naive of Shaw to say that Galatea could never love Pygmalion: about a month after the treatment, Patrick Blair paid a visit to the family and ‘saw every thing in good order’ (Blair 1982: 328). Fifteen tons of water in

ninety minutes performs the metamorphosis; the myth is reintroduced as instrumental reason. Pygmalion becomes the epitome of domination, who shapes Galatea according to his enlightenment ideals. There is no place for not-knowing; everything is illuminated with the triumph of reason over madness. Alienation is thwarted through appropriation and suppression. Instrumental reason restores the absolute mythology where the subject is both enslaved and empowered.

Brant's novel misplaces the accent and shifts the focus onto Antonia's independence and nonconformism. When she is asked by Jonathan whether her son threatened to summon Sir Titus Foley, Antonia is unsettled by the word 'threatened' and looks away, 'feeling heavy of heart' (A 69). The unwitting reader may assume that Antonia is disconcerted because she is independent and thinks it absurd that Jonathan may believe her son could threaten her. However, Sir Titus Foley, who is nothing but a name at this point in the text, could be the true source of heavy feelings on the side of Antonia. Her refusal to discuss this topic with Jonathan gives food for thought. Antonia's humiliation does not transpire, and her secret will stay with her for a long time, until the reader learns about Sir Titus Foley much later in the text. Yet he remains a minor character, and Antonia manages to resist his Pygmalionism.

Postmodern interpretation of Patrick Blair as Sir Titus Foley in the novel obfuscates Pygmalion's role in 'curing' Antonia. Having explored the symptom of Pygmalionism in *Autumn Duchess*, I would like to state that the Pygmalion myth is both refuted and reincarnated in the novel. Antonia refuses to be normalized by Sir Titus Foley, and no treatment can make her conform. The myth of instrumental reason is unveiled as self-deception on the side of Pygmalion, who believes in the omnipotence of his domination over Galatea. On the other hand, Pygmalionism remains a gap in the understanding of the text, as the Duke's assimilatory offer is unconsciously accepted by Antonia when she falls in love with Jonathan. Accepting the offer, Antonia succumbs to the powers of Pygmalionism without realizing it. The reader is deceived and is submerged into the myth of Pygmalion when Antonia comes to life thanks to her love for Jonathan. Sir Titus Foley's story appears as an innocuous pastiche. Postmodernism's 'protective wall of playful unconcern' (Bauman 1991: 260) splits the novel and hides almost all the traces of the subjugation of Galatea.

Pygmalion deceives himself when he thinks that Galatea is animated owing to his mastery, and Galatea escapes into an illusion of her independence from the normalizing force of Pygmalionism. The Pygmalion myth is dialectically experienced as both self-deception and authentic reality of the modern subject. Even the author of the myth is deceived in trying to demythologize it. There is no possibility of writing against the myth without evoking it in the mythical consciousness of the reader; but silencing the myth and distorting it is hardly a solution,

since it leads to even stronger support for Pygmalionism as a rend in the fabric of the text. It is important to come to terms with the myth and achieve the balance between mythical and critical thinking, both of which may be relinquished in postmodernity, with its validation of difference and absolute not-knowing. Obliterating Pygmalionism misleads the reader and mythologizes the text from the perspective of Galatea, who – being unconsciously dominated and oppressed by the same forces of instrumental reason – is bequeathed with Pygmalion’s supernatural powers.

Conclusion

The discussion above gives support to my main thesis that every effort to unveil the myth ends in developing a new metaphor to explain the metamorphosis of Galatea, which leads to reintroduction of mythical consciousness into the story. The artists of modernity whose works were scrutinized in this study worked along these lines, trying to demythologize the Pygmalion myth and present creation as ‘eine vollkommene Täuschung’ (Blühm 1988: 22), a perfect deception. This dissertation has also outlined how the Pygmalion myth serves the purpose of metaphorical evocation of the subject of modernity with its inherent controversy and ambiguity, and has argued that the dialectic of the Pygmalion myth is characteristic of the modern age. The dialectical approach towards the myth and its interpretation allowed me to look at the moments when the fabric of the text is rent by the incongruity between the myth and its criticism. The Pygmalion myth can be useful as a heuristic device in literary criticism, and its further application as a trope for interpreting the crucial facets of enlightenment and opening the unresolved questions which the literary studies have inherited from the age of modernity promises new insights into the field and can provide better understanding of the dialectic of myth and enlightenment.

The modern Pygmalion is a deceived deceiver who considers his work animated with his powers, whereas the texts undermine this conviction and make Pygmalion doubt the transformation. He is an artist or an educator, and his art conceals art so well that he gives in to self-delusion only to question it once again. Galatea comes to life, but her status is equivocal. The myth problematizes the story, and the reader has to balance between understanding and not-understanding the myth. Understanding the myth demands either uncovering the underlying metaphor and exploring the complexity of its conceptual design or experiencing the myth as authentic reality and animating Galatea through empathy. Conversely, not-understanding the myth involves either withholding judgement and experiencing the myth in its absolute reality or critical analysis and dismantling the fabric of the myth. Consequently, the modern interpretations of the Pygmalion myth strive to achieve a balance between mythologizing and demythologizing, understanding and not-understanding, animation and petrification.

In the postmodern condition, the Pygmalion myth may become the myth of Galatea, with the statue's assertion of independence from Pygmalion. Galatea becomes a voice of a new difference and selfhood. The postmodern tradition problematizes the Pygmalion myth only to install the myth of the all-potent subject in the guise of Galatea, or to obliterate the subject altogether. Empathizing with the object and realizing its animation, postmodernity is critical of the totalitarian and unreflective instrumental reason which underlies the modern Pygmalion mythology; but it fails to refute the myth and hence reveals its complicity with and affinity to modernity.

In summary, the Pygmalion myth makes one aware of the subject-object relationship in modernity, where Galatea's subjectivity is acknowledged by Pygmalion and her otherness disrupts his ability to dominate the animated statue. In postmodernity, Pygmalion as a subject retreats from the stage, turning into a symptom (e.g. Dörrie 1974: 66), and Galatea claims her independence and the right to be different. She becomes the modern heroine of the myth. The reversal makes Galatea the source domain in relation to the subject of modernity; and the cornucopia of possible realizations of Galatea's rights is but a reinstallation of the enlightenment ideals. Awareness of ambivalence and contingency of relationship between the subject and object in the age of modernity does not preclude the possibility of domination, but it undermines its legitimacy by acknowledging the subjectivity of the other. As a result, the subject of modernity remains split between myth and enlightenment.

[15000 words]

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